

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13
ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SSM-03 /087 W
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0432
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IS, PGOV
SUBJ: HERUT CENTRAL COMMITTEE APPROVES BEGIN PEACE PLAN AND
PICKS HAIM LANDAU FOR CABINET POST

1. SUMMARY: IN A STORMY, DRAMATIC AND OFTEN EMOTIONAL MEETING,
THE HERUT CENTRAL COMMITTEE LAST NIGHT DEBATED THE GOI PEACE
PLAN AND ELECTED A NEW HERUT MINISTER TO THE CABINET. PRIME MINIS-
TER BEGIN APPEARED TWICE BEFORE THE MEETING, MAKING WHAT MANY
OBSERVERS CONSIDER ONE OF THE BEST SPEECHES OF HIS CAREER. THE
MEETING WHICH DID NOT LACK IN SURPRISES, (SUCH AS THE APPEARANCE
OF AGRICULTURE MINISTER SHARON), AWARDED AN OVERWHELMING VOTE OF
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SUPPORT TO THE PEACE PLAN, (ALTHOUGH ONLY SOME 26 PERCENT OF
THE MEMBERS WERE PRESENT TO VOTE), BUT GAVE A SURPRISINGLY SMALL
MAJORITY TO HAIM LANDAU, THE PRIME MINISTER'S CANDIDATE FOR THE MIN-
ISTERIAL POST, AND THIS DESPITE THE FACT THAT BEGIN INDICATED
THAT HE WOULD REGARD THIS AS A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN HIMSELF.
END SUMMARY

2. 701 HERUT CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS MET ON JANUARY 8 TO DISCUSS THE GOVERNMENT PEACE PLAN AND ELECT A CANDIDATE FOR A CABINET POST. THIS MEETING HAS BEEN AWAITED WITH GREAT INTEREST, AS THESE MEMBERS REPRESENT THE RANK AND FILE OF THE HERUT MOVEMENT, THE HARD CORE OF THE LIKUD. INTEREST WAS FURTHER HEIGHTENED BY THE CONTROVERSIAL NATURE OF SEVERAL CLAUSES OF THE PEACE PLAN WHICH, ACCORDING TO MANY HERUT LOYALISTS, RAN COUNTER TO OLD HERUT PRINCIPLES. IT WAS GENERALLY HELD THAT THIS BODY REPRESENTED "BEGIN'S REAL CONSTITUENCY," AND WHILE IN THE PAST THERE HAVE NEVER BEEN ANY DOUBTS REGARDING BEGIN'S COMPLETE AUTHORITY OVER HIS SUPPORTERS, MANY OBSERVERS INDICATED THAT THIS TIME A REAL TEST AWAITED THE PRIME MINISTER.

3. THE DEBATE OPENED WITH A POLITICAL REVIEW DELIVERED BY THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO ALSO ELABORATED ON AND DEFENDED HIS PEACE PLAN. THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO SPOKE FOR ABOUT 75 MINUTES, OPENED WITH A SHARP REJOINDER TO RECENT SADAT REMARKS TO THE EFFECT THAT SADAT WOULD NOT TOLERATE ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN SINAI AFTER A PEACE TREATY WAS SIGNED. BEGIN DESCRIBED THESE REMARKS AS THE KIND OF "TOUGHNESS AND OBSTINACY" WHICH COULD NOT AID THE PEACE PROCESS, AND REITERATED THE ISRAELI PRINCIPLE NOT TO ABANDON ANY JEWISH SETTLEMENTS AND TO AFFORD THEM ISRAEL'S PROTECTION AND DEFENSE. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT BEGIN SAID FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT IF THIS COMPROMISE PROPOSAL IS REJECTED BY EGYPT, THEN ISRAEL COULD, ACCORDING TO INTERNATIONAL LAW, WITHDRAW HER PROPOSAL AND DECLARE THAT IT WAS NO LONGER VALID. HE REPEATED HIS CALL TO SADAT

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TO NEGOTIATE WITHOUT THERE BEING EITHER VICTORS OR VANQUISHED. ADDRESSING PRESIDENT ASSAD OF SYRIA, THE PRIME MINISTER AGAIN URGED HIM TO HOLD A MEETING, ANYWHERE. BEGIN THEN REFERRED TO THE PEACE PLAN, STRESSING THAT ISRAEL'S PROPOSAL FOR PEACE WITH EGYPT WAS A GOOD ONE AND WOULD GUARANTEE ISRAEL'S SECURITY NOT ONLY IN THIS GENERATION BUT ALSO DURING GENERATIONS TO COME. BEGIN SAID ISRAEL WOULD INSIST THAT THE ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN SINAI REMAIN UNDER THE PROTECTION OF AN ISRAELI FORCE. ISRAEL, HE ADDED, ALSO INSISTED ON A VERY WIDE DEMILITARIZED ZONE IN SINAI. AS FOR JUDEA AND SAMARIA, THE PRIME MINISTER REPEATED THE FAMOUS PARA. 24 OF THE PEACE PLAN, REITERATING ISRAEL'S CLAIM OF SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE WEST BANK, BUT RECOGNIZING OTHER CLAIMS OF SOVEREIGNTY: "WE ARE READY TO LEAVE THIS QUESTION OF SOVEREIGNTY OPEN." THERE WOULD NEVER BE ANY NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PLO, NOR WILL A PALESTINIAN STATE BE ESTABLISHED, BEGIN ADDED. THE OPPOSITION TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUCH A STATE WAS NOW SHARED BY MANY OTHERS INCLUDING PRESIDENT CARTER BUT, THE PRIME MINISTER ADDED, ISRAEL DIFFERS WITH THE U.S. ON AN IMPORTANT ISSUE, VIZ. ISRAEL WOULD NOT RECOGNIZE ANY JORDANIAN RIGHT TO SOVEREIGNTY OVER JUDEA AND SAMARIA. THIS LAST REMARK WAS GREETED BY LOUD APPLAUSE. AS FOR SETTLEMENTS, THE PRIME MINISTER PRAISED HIS GOVERNMENT'S RECORD: "IN SEVERAL MONTHS WE HAVE ESTABLISHED TEN NEW SETTLE-

MENTS ... WE HAVE OPENED UP SAMARIA TO THE JEWS." THE PRIME MINISTER CONCLUDED HIS POLITICAL SURVEY BY REPEATING THAT THE IDF WOULD REMAIN IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA AND THAT THIS POSITION HAD RECEIVED WIDESPREAD SUPPORT IN THE U.S. BEGIN THEN TURNED TO THE ELECTION OF THE NEW HERUT MINISTER, AND URGED THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE TO ELECT "MY FRIEND, HAIM LANDAU." BEGIN EMPHASIZED THAT HE COULD HAVE PICKED A MINISTER WITHOUT GOING TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, BUT THAT HE HAD CHOSEN THE DEMOCRATIC WAY. HE STRESSED THAT THE CHOICE BETWEEN LANDAU AND KATZ WAS NOT AN IDEOLOGICAL ONE, SINCE

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BOTH SUPPORTED THE PEACE PLAN. (KATZ'S SPEECH LATER INDICATED THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE.) BEGIN ADDED THAT LANDAU HAD PERFECT MINISTERIAL QUALIFICATIONS, INCLUDING EXPERIENCE AND POLITICAL EXPERTISE.

4. PARTICIPANTS IN THE DEBATE INCLUDED SHMUEL KATZ, WHO EXPRESSED SHARP OPPOSITION TO VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE BEGIN PLAN. HE SAID THAT HE HAD NEVER BEEN CONSULTED PRIOR TO THE PLAN'S ADOPTION, ALTHOUGH HE HAD BEEN GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS HIS VIEWS

SUBSEQUENTLY. AS FOR THE PLAN ITSELF, KATZ SAID THAT ISRAEL OFFERED TO RETURN THE WHOLE OF SINAI TO SADAT, YET SADAT STILL INSISTS ON HIS ORIGINAL DEMANDS. THE PEACE PLAN HAS THEREFORE BECOME

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A BASIS FOR NEGOTIATIONS, AND PRESSURE WILL BE EXERTED ON ISRAEL TO MAKE CONCESSIONS IN ADDITION TO THE FAR-REACHING ONES ALREADY MADE BY HER. KATZ ALSO QUESTIONED THE WISDOM OF MAKING CONCESSIONS BEFORE THE NEGOTIATIONS OPEN, THUS PREMATURELY RESTRICTING THE DISCUSSION TO THE LIMITED CONFINES BETWEEN ISRAEL'S OFFER AND SADAT'S DEMANDS. PERHAPS, KATZ SURMISED, THE CONSIDERATION WAS THAT BY SHOWING GENEROSITY IN SINAI ISRAEL COULD ENSURE HER POSITION IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA. BUT THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED. AS FOR THE WEST BANK, CARTER INSISTS THAT ISRAEL AND JORDAN TOGETHER ESTABLISH JOINT RULE FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, AFTER WHICH THE RESIDENTS WOULD DECIDE. "IT IS AN ILLUSION TO SAY THAT THE U.S. SUPPORTS OUR PLAN -- THEY ONLY ACCEPTED IT AS A BASIS FOR NEGOTIATIONS." KATZ SAID THAT AUTONOMY DID NOT ENSURE ISRAELI SOVEREIGNTY. HE ALSO QUESTIONED THE NEED TO INCLUDE JORDAN IN THE PLAN AND WAS CRITICAL OF AN ISRAELI GOVERNMENT THAT IS READY FOR THE FIRST TIME TO ALLOW REFUGEES TO RETURN TO ISRAELI TERRITORY. KATZ CONCLUDED BY CALLING FOR LARGE-SCALE SETTLEMENT, AND THE APPLICATION OF ISRAELI SOVEREIGNTY TO ALL ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS.

5. HAIM LANDAU MADE A BRIEF APPEARANCE, IN WHICH HE RECALLED HIS LOYALTY TO THE PARTY AND TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL IDEALS. HE EXPRESSED HIS FULL SUPPORT FOR THE BEGIN PLAN.

6. THE LIMELIGHT WAS STOLEN BY TWO HERUT GENERALS - HARON AND WEIZMAN. AGRICULTURE MINISTER SHARON, WHOSE SETTLEMENT PROPOSALS WERE TURNED DOWN BY THE CABINET YESTERDAY, UNEXPECTEDLY DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DEBATE. HE CALLED THE BEGIN PLAN "GOOD AND DARING," AND EXPRESSED HIS SUPPORT THEREOF. BUT ITS SUCCESS, HE SAID, DEPENDED TO A CONSIDERABLE EXTENT ON ISRAEL'S ACTIONS. HERE HE CENSORED THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS "WEAKNESS" ON THIS "MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE OF SETTLEMENTS." HE SAID THAT ISRAEL HAD A GOOD GOVERNMENT, BUT -- "AND I SAY THIS WITH PAIN" -- NOT ONE THAT ENCOURAGES SETTLEMENT. SHARON REVEALED THAT

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HE HAD BEEN THE ONLY HERUT MEMBER TO VOTE IN FAVOR OF LARGE-SCALE SETTLEMENT IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA. "THERE IS NO MAJORITY IN THE GOVERNMENT FOR WIDESPREAD AND FREE SETTLEMENT IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA," SHARON CONCLUDED. HE EXPRESSED SUPPORT OF KATZ, BECAUSE OF 'KATZ'S POSITION ON SETTLEMENTS.' SHARON'S REMARKS PROVOKED DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN, WHO CRITICIZED MINISTERS WHO

ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT. HE DISCLOSED THAT SHARON HAD GIVEN THE PEACE PLAN HIS FULL SUPPORT EVEN BEFORE HE HIMSELF HAD DONE SO. ON THE QUESTION OF SETTLEMENTS THE DEFENSE MINISTER HINTED THAT THE LAST 48 HOURS HAD BEEN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR ISRAEL WHERE WORLD PUBLIC OPINION WAS CONCERNED. HE EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR LANDAU.

7. GEULA COHEN, M.K., MADE A PASSIONATE APPEAL AGAINST ACCEPTING THE PLAN. SHE CRITICIZED VARIOUS DETAILS, PARTICULARLY THOSE RELATING TO AUTONOMY AND TO NON-EXTENSION OF ISRAELI SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE WEST BANK.

8. THE MOST DRAMATIC PART OF THE EVENING THEN FOLLOWED WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER, VISIBLY AGITATED, TOOK THE FLOOR A SECOND TIME. IN ONE OF HIS MOST EMOTIONAL ADDRESSES HE AGAIN DEFENDED THE PLAN. REPLYING TO ITS CRITICS, BEGIN SAID THAT HIS CHIEF GOAL WAS TO PREVENT WAR. HE WAS BITTERLY CRITICAL OF SHMUEL KATZ, WHO "HAS NEVER, UP UNTIL THIS EVENING, EXPRESSED OPPOSITION TO THE PLAN." HE WAS ASTONISHED THAT KATZ WANTED TO JOIN A GOVERNMENT WHOSE PLAN HE REJECTED IN TOTO. REFERRING TO SHARON, HE STRESSED THAT THERE WAS NO NEED FOR AN ALL-EMBRACING RESOLUTION ON SETTLEMENTS. WITH UNUSUAL FIRMNESS AND PASSION BEGIN REPEATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE ITS PLAN, AND IF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE DECIDED OTHERWISE HE WOULD RESIGN THAT VERY NIGHT. AT ANY EVENT, BEGIN ADDED, "MY SERVICE WILL CONTINUE FOR ONLY A LIMITED NUMBER OF YEARS."

9. THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE THEN VOTED BY AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY (168 TO 15) IN FAVOR OF THE GOVERNMENT PEACE PLAN, AND CHOSE HAIM LANDAU FOR THE CABINET POST BY 306 TO 207 (60 PERCENT - 40 PERCENT). OBSERVERS EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT THE NUMBER OF VOTES POLLED

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BY SHMUEL KATZ, PARTICULARLY FOLLOWING THE STRONG BACKING OF LANDAU VOICED BY THE PRIME MINISTER. IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT THIS COULD HAVE BEEN AN INDIRECT VOTE OF PROTEST BY MANY DELEGATES AGAINST VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE PEACE PLAN, HOWEVER, OTHERS INTERPRETED IT AS MERE LACK OF PERSONAL ENTHUSIASM FOR LANDAU. THE VOTE ON THE PEACE PLAN WAS TAKEN AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING, BY WHICH TIME OVER 500 CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS HAD DEPARTED. IN ITS COVERAGE OF THE MEETING MAARIV REPORTS THAT HERUT OPPOSITION FACTION MAY NOW BE FORMED AROUND THE NUCLEUS OF KATZ AND GEULA COHEN.

10. FULL TEXT OF BEGIN STATEMENT (SEE CAIRO 684) WILL BE SENT TOMORROW.
LEWIS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
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Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 jan 1978
Decapton Date: 01 jan 1960
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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